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Growing together:

The key to a healthy marriage

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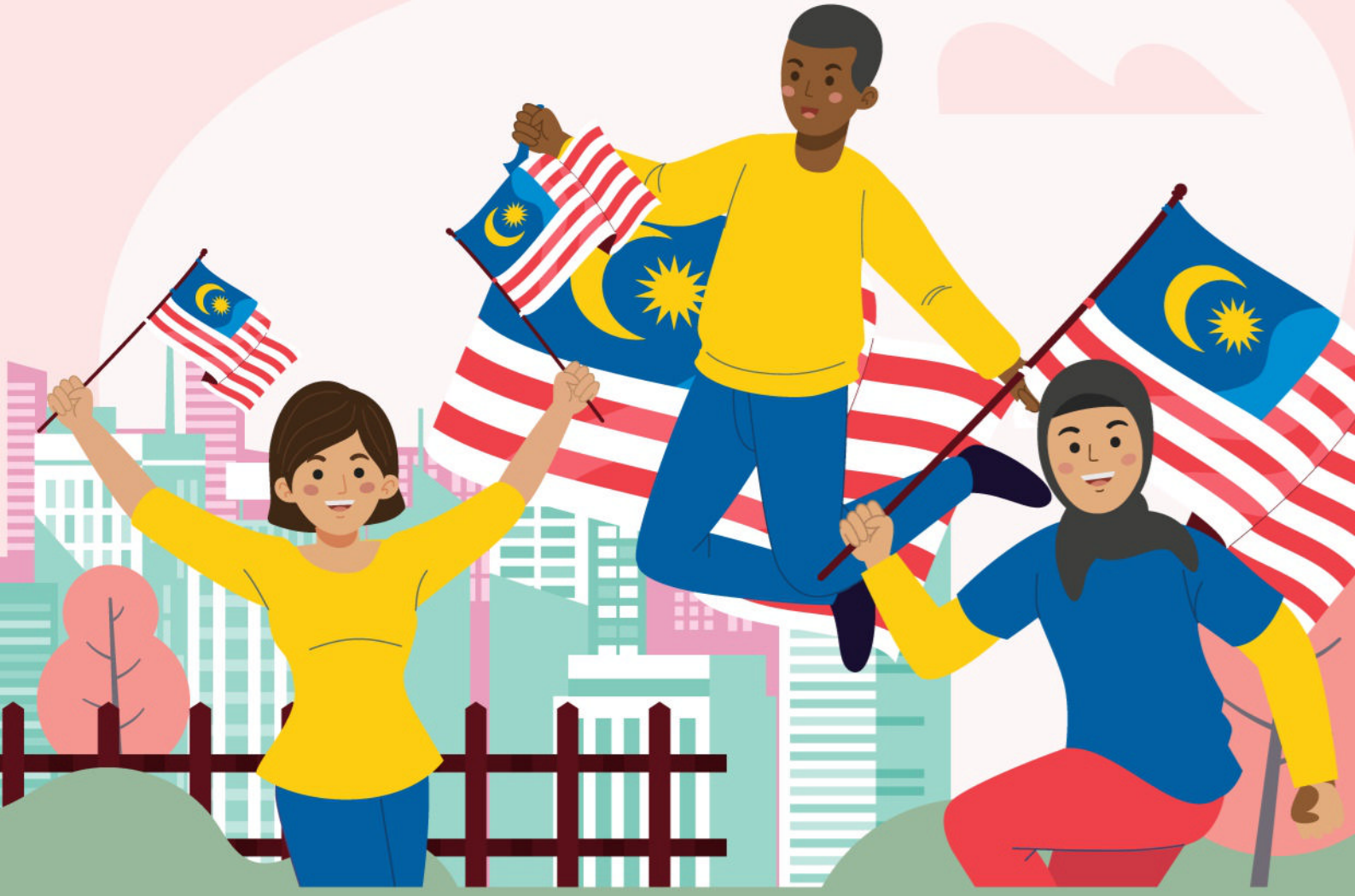

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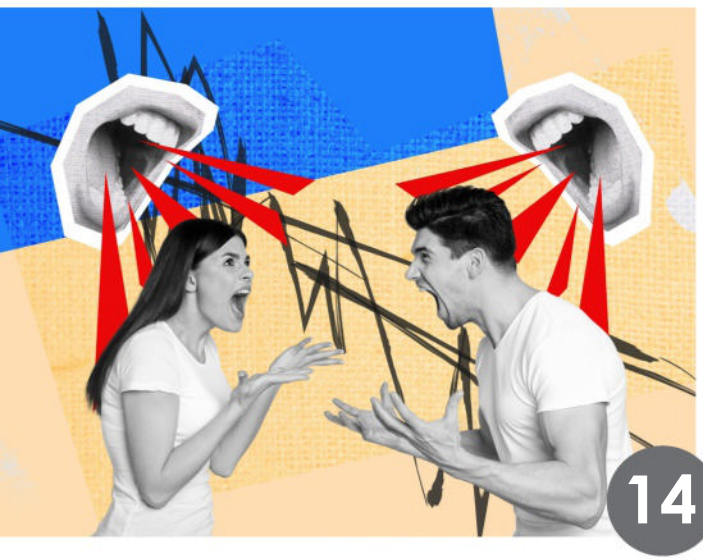
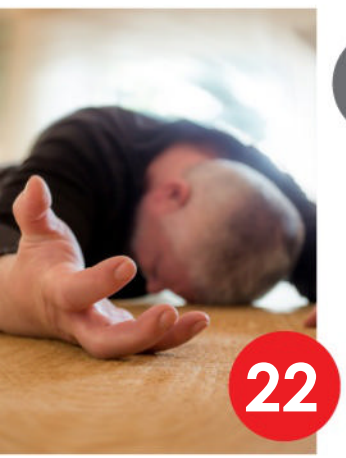
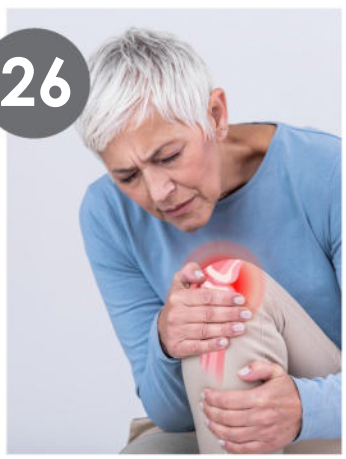
CONTENTS







08 WELLNESS

What to do about Beard Dandruff (Beardruff)

09 KEYS TO A HEALTHY MARRIAGE

It takes two to tango

14 NAVIGATING THE SEAS OF MARRIAGE

Discussing common marriage struggles and empowering solutions

20 FAIL ORAL HEALTH, FRAIL GENERAL HEALTH

The link you cannot ignore

22 8 COMMON HOME EMERGENCIES

Small steps to making big differences

26 FROM ACHE TO ACE

Insights from a pharmacist on supplements for knee pain

30 TIPS & TRICKS TO MASTER EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Listen to speak

36 STYLE

Piercing aftercare

38 BRIGHT FUTURE, BRIGHT EYES

This is not fantastic

42 FRENCH FRIES VS SWEET POTATO FRIES

A questionable twist to a fan favourite

44 4 MUST-VISIT WONDERS OF THE WORLD

For all the wanderlust wonderers out there

48 WE ALL SCREAM FOR ICE-CREAM!

Make your own ice-cream without an ice-cream maker!

52 SUBSCRIPTION

EDITOR'S NOTE

A marriage is never always a bed of roses and it shouldn't be. Here's why...

While the sweetest highs in a marriage will always be treasured, it is the lows that can create a bond like none other.

In today's world, a marriage is sometimes seen as 'overrated' especially with the increase of divorce rates over the last couple of years.

If you're married to the love of your life or planning to jump on the matrimony bandwagon, how do you ensure that your relationship withstands every storm that comes its way?

If you were to ask around, you'll get a variety of answers from "the storm shall pass" to "never go to bed angry". But what do the experts have to say?

This month, two experts spoke on things that every couple should keep in mind as they work towards improving their relationship. They also offered helpful insights on navigating through tough times.

So, dive in to our feature articles to find out more on what they have to share!

Lastly, I would like to wish all Malaysians Selamat Hari Merdeka and Happy Malaysia Day! May we unite as a community through an interest we share in common – good health (and food)!

As always, never stop spreading love and joy in our community!

Edeline

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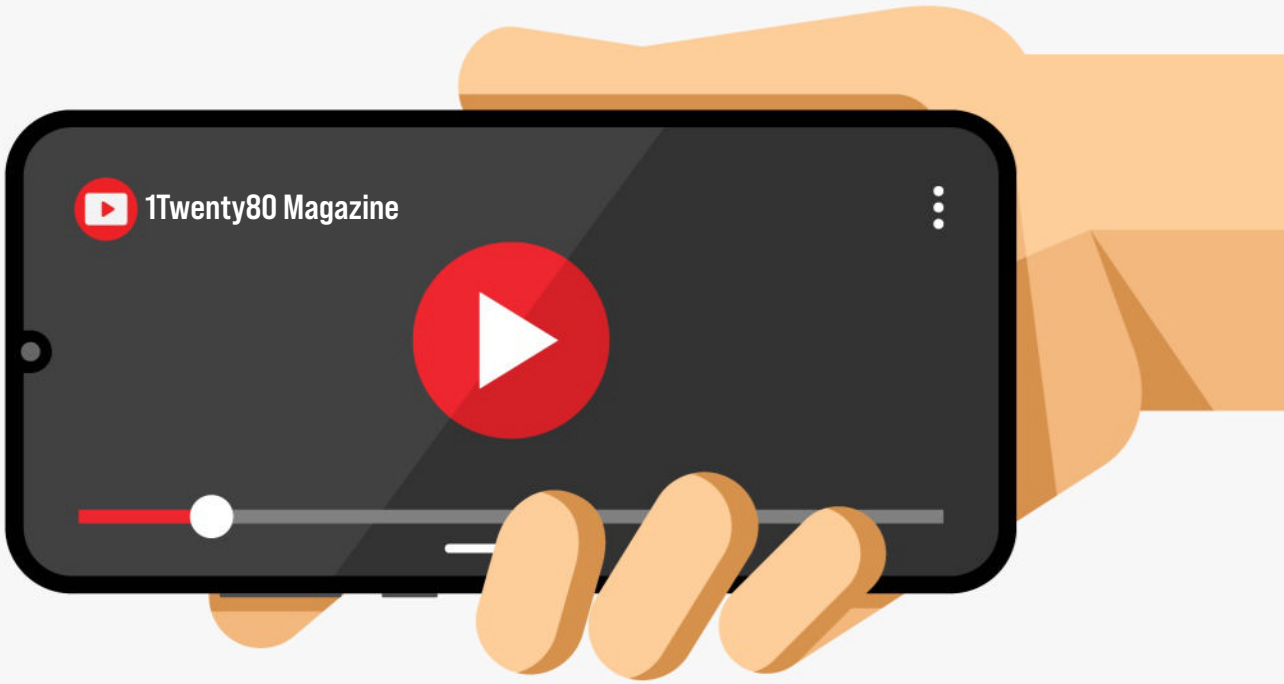

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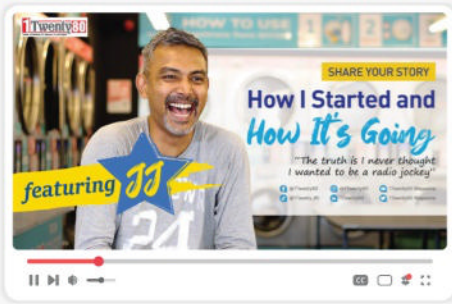

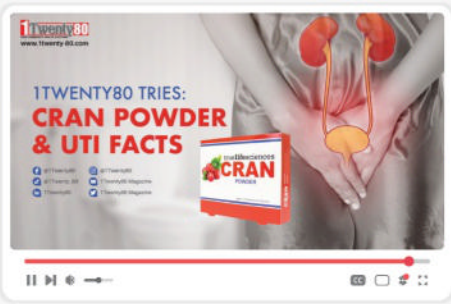

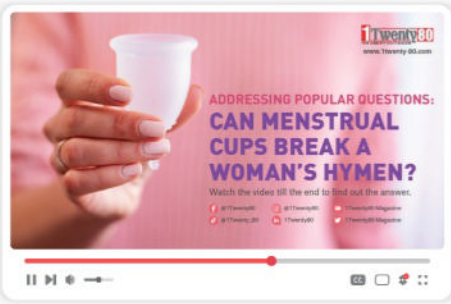

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WHAT TO DO ABOUT BEARD DANDRUFF (BEARDRUFF)

The wait is over

By Isabel Andrew

Beards have no purpose. In contrast to our eyebrows and eyelashes that shield our eyes from dust and debris, hair on the chin and jawline are biologically pointless. So why is it that a lush beard that a lush beard tends to reflect manliness?

Several studies, though yielding inconsistent results, suggest that beards are loved for socio-sexual reasons, one of them being a male-specific trait. Beards also draw attention for a less lovely reason, beard dandruff (beardruff).

WHAT CAUSES BEARDRUFF?

Like regular dandruff, beardruff is caused by the yeast in our skin called Malassezia. Coupled with genetic and environmental factors, the skin under your beard will:

- Turn red and become scaly and flaky.
- Have skin flakes, also known as dandruff.
- Itch persistently.

HOW TO TREAT BEARDRUFF?

You could try these methods for at least a week or two until you start seeing results:

Exfoliate to remove dead skin cells.

Gently massage the skin under your beard with a beard brush that has soft bristles. This will distribute the oils from your skin and soften the beard hair.

Shampoo or cleanse your beard.

Wash your beard with a medicated shampoo that consists of dandruff-fighting ingredients like:

- Pyrithione zinc.
- Coal tar.
- Selenium sulfide.
- Tea tree oil.

Lather and massage the shampoo gently onto the beard hairs and the skin underneath. Rinse after one to two minutes with lukewarm water. If the shampoo makes your skin dry, opt for a cleanser designed especially for beards.

Moisturise to rehydrate and protect your skin after shampooing.

Apply a moisturiser while your skin is damp. Then rub in a few drops of beard oil and work it from the tip to the ends of the hairs. If you have acne-prone skin, go for a simpler, non-comedogenic oil (it won't clog your pores), like argan oil.

Growing a beard can be a struggle for some men. To top it off, dandruff would be a nightmare that could bring down one's self-esteem. Nevertheless, do not falter. Try out this simple routine or speak to a doctor for more treatment options.

Sources: Healthline, Medical News Today, WebMD, Numan

Keys to a healthy marriage

It takes two to tango

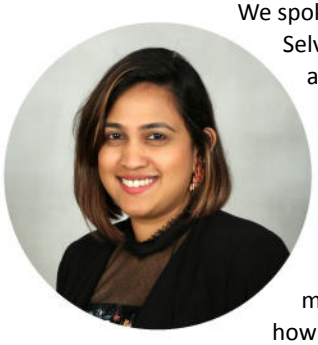
By Isabel Andrew

'Till death do us part' demands lots of patience and plenty of unconditional love. Decades ago, staying happily married wasn't uncommon. Though, that doesn't necessarily mean it can stand the test of time.

Marriages, a lesser-known casualty of the Covid-19 pandemic, suffered greatly, particularly with non-Muslim couples. According to the Marriage and Divorce Statistics Malaysia 2022 report, the number of non-Muslim divorces in Malaysia rose by 30.4 percent from 9,419 cases in 2020 to 12,284 cases in 2021.

In a world where appearances are heavily critiqued and one's bank balance speaks louder than one's personality, sometimes it's tough to see eye to eye especially during tough times.

What more when it comes to building a heart to heart connection?



We spoke to Jean Selvam, a marriage and family therapist at Rekindle Therapy, to understand more about healthy marriages and how partners can deepen their love.

1Twenty80:

How is a healthy marriage defined?

Jean Selvam:

I believe a healthy marriage should, among many other aspects, encompass respect, trust and love. A healthy marriage should also embrace open communication and emotional connection.

Emotional connection comes alive when couples spend quality time together and put effort into remembering certain likes or dislikes their partner has. When your partner has had a rough day, listening to them and giving them their space shows care and appreciation.

> I BELIEVE A HEALTHY MARRIAGE SHOULD, AMONG MANY OTHER ASPECTS, ENCOMPASS RESPECT, TRUST AND LOVE. A HEALTHY MARRIAGE SHOULD ALSO EMBRACE OPEN COMMUNICATION AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTION.

1Twenty80:

What are some of the factors that can get in between a married couple?

Jean:

There are plenty of factors that can get in between a married couple. The extended family is one factor. Living with or being surrounded by family members who don't have the couple's best intentions at heart, can sometimes lead to rifts in the marriage. A classic case would be elderly figures asking a younger couple about having children, which can be a sensitive topic to some.

Besides that, some couples may experience difficulties in their marriage due to their commitments in life. I have couples who come to me with their daily schedule, which consists of juggling work, children, and the household. At the end of the day, couples don't have time for each other. So that can lead to cracks in the marriage.

There are other contributing factors too, like infidelity. An extramarital affair can lead to broken trust and a loss of emotional connection. Couples who cannot stand being around each other, cannot possibly have open communication. Over time, this can lead to the build-up of negative perceptions towards the other person.

1Twenty80:

Why did marriages last longer than they do now?

Jean:

Many reasons, some good and some unhealthy. I say this because I believe it is important to understand the context of time and the settings of that generation.

It's easy to say that a long time ago, marriages were easy, which on paper they were. Life was less expensive, less stressful, and maybe even happier. In reality, however, each generation had its fair share of economic and societal pressures.

The current world is becoming much smaller. We have so many options when it comes to having a relationship. Some are looking for long-term relationships, while the rest prefer casual flings. But having so many options might often leave us with none.

I meet young adults in their 20s and 30s who are ready to put themselves out there. In an era where priorities have shifted to coveting financial gains, assets and the freedom to explore life, it's becoming increasingly difficult to meet a better half who shares the same ambitions. Thus, the fear of commitment and meeting the right person is too much of a risk to take.

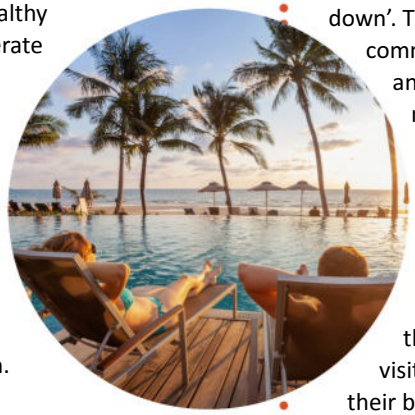
Aside from that, some people may have grown up watching the cruel side of an unhappy marriage. This can leave a traumatic void that ultimately shapes their perception of people. As a result, they may have trust issues, unresolved abandonment issues and more.

1Twenty80:

Can couples set boundaries for themselves in a marriage?

Jean:

Yes, setting boundaries is an integral part of healthy relationships because it helps to maintain a balance between each partner. A marriage may bring two people together, but two people cannot become one person.



Couples need healthy outlets to recuperate outside of the home environment. In a way, it's part of self-care. Couples can reconnect with old friends and take a few days away on vacation.

This is important to maintain a healthy balance with those in and out of a couple's immediate social circle. They'll be re-energised which can actually draw them closer to each other because they are set through open communication. Hence, it's critical to be honest and respectful when talking about each other's need for space and time.

1Twenty80:

Why do some members of the younger generation have a negative stereotype of marriage?

Jean:

The younger generation appears to be afraid of being 'tied down'. They are terrified of committing to a relationship and eventually getting married because they prefer ease and straightforwardness over tolerance and compromise.

If they're married, they may be unable to visit all the countries on their bucket list. If there's a rough patch in a marriage, one cannot simply walk out the door. In short, when you're in a relationship with another person, you don't have control over the outcome. Not having that control can be frightening and a significant emotional risk that few are ready to face.

1Twenty80:

Couples who are parents may forget to be spouses. What can they do to rekindle their love life and why is it important?

Jean:

Couples with children can easily forget another huge role they play – as spouses. A close and intimate loving relationship between spouses is essential for a healthy family. Parents must be able to rely on and communicate with one another for support.

First and foremost, there must be the awareness and realisation that needs to be put into creating and preserving a relationship. With this comes the time that needs to be spent together, date nights and pillow talks. It is critical to keep the relationship going because parenting can be stressful and draining. In addition, children will also need to see that their parents are in a healthy relationship.

1Twenty80:

What are the important keys to a healthy marriage?

Jean:

I would say that the keys to a healthy marriage are open communication and emotional connection.

1Twenty80:

What advice would you give to those who are going to tie the knot?

Jean:

Ask yourself these questions, "Why am I doing this?", "What do I gain from being in a relationship?" and "Am I getting married because I want to, or because it's the next step in life?".

As humans, we require emotional connections. It may appear smooth on the surface, however, marriage is a vow to love unconditionally. It can only survive if you're wholeheartedly committed.

If marriage isn't for you, then that's okay too. Some people are actually better off on their own because they enjoy their own company. Where does companionship rank on your priority list?

1Twenty80:

Marital problems are a stigma in the country. Is it vital for couples to go for counselling?

Jean:

I don't believe it is vital for couples to seek counselling. Therapy is an option to consider, but it's not a cure-all.

Before going for counselling, couples must decide if it is something that both partners want. This is because in therapy, both spouses must contribute equally. Counselling will not progress unless both parties are motivated.

Some couples feel that they can sort their conflicts out and resolve their issues on their own. Some resort to religious communities and support groups. Whatever path they choose, it is critical that couples learn to communicate openly, connect emotionally and love each other healthily.

> FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND THE COMMUNITY CAN ALL LEND SUPPORT TO MARRIAGES.

1Twenty80:

What roles can friends, extended family, and the community play in a marriage?

Jean:

Friends, family, and the community can all lend support to marriages. During difficult times, they can provide encouragement, compassion, and aid to the spouse and their family. Mostly, by encouraging the couple to seek help rather than stigmatising counselling.

Jean Selvam is a licensed marriage & family therapist with a passion for helping people. Since joining Rekindle Therapy in 2014, she has counselled many individuals, couples and families from various walks of life. She strongly holds on to the words of the poet, Rumi, "The wound is the place where the light enters you."

Sources: Department of Statistics Malaysia, The Star

Love Across Generations

We asked three married couples from three generations to tell us what keeps the boat sailing:

#1
Ain Ashikin & Shabil (married for 2 years)

SHABIL: A healthy marriage is built upon communication. We have to always appreciate and be mindful of each other.

AIN ASHIKIN: As a newlywed couple, we found it hard to tolerate each other's lifestyle and behaviour. My husband used to bring home his work like he used to in his bachelor days, and I was the opposite. We would end up quarrelling about this. But we came to understand that communication is the key to a happy marriage. We talked, and now he leaves work at the doorstep. I'm a happy wife!

#2
Christina & Andrew (married for 26 years)

ANDREW: In our marriage, sometimes we struggle with understanding what the other person wants, and giving them the space to express it. I realised over time that taking a few moments before reacting to a situation saves us days of arguments. It helps to also recall romantic moments from our early days as a couple.

CHRISTINA: Challenges are not something new, in fact, they are part of our married life. Having to learn, adjust and respect each other's opinions and thoughts took some time. Now that we are in our fifties, health is slowly becoming another challenge. Together, we are helping each other to age gracefully.

#3
Jesamal & Amaladass (married for 46 years)

AMALADASS: Our marriage survived rough patches too, but we always thought of each other. We worked together as a team, not against each other.

JESAMAL: In the early days of our marriage, we were living apart. My husband was away working, and I took care of the household. What kept us strong and united was the promise of love that we held on to. It's always important to think of 'us' and not 'me'. ■

Navigating the Seas of Marriage

Discussing common marriage struggles and empowering solutions

By Yasanthi Devi

Marriage is a beautiful journey that brings two individuals together, but it can also be filled with challenges. Remember, every marriage is unique, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. It's essential to approach challenges with patience, understanding, and a willingness to work together as a team. Seeking professional help from therapists or marriage counselors can provide valuable guidance and support throughout the journey of overcoming these struggles and strengthening your marriage.

On that note, we've gotten in touch with Faith Foo, a professional counselor and Director of ABRI Integrated Mental Health to share her expert insights. Faith is also a mental health Coach, trainer, and author. Here's what Faith has to say on the topic of common struggles in a marriage and its solutions.

1Twenty80:

What are some of the most common issues or struggles that couples face in their relationships/ marriages, and why do you think they occur frequently?

Faith Foo:

You might be surprised that infidelity is typically not the most important factor contributing to divorce. Divorces occur mostly due to failed relationships. Factors that lead to a failed relationship include stress at work, the daily grind of raising kids, financial stress, communication breakdown, constant fights, and lack of support.

No one walks down the aisle with divorce in mind. We all want a happy and lasting marriage. Statistics have shown that the divorce rate is rising fast worldwide. Alarmingly, 40 to 50 percent of first marriages will end in divorce. Many couples I see are confused about how they could go from being madly in love with each other to purely despising each other. How did they move from love to hate? Their question often is, "How did it all happen?"

Global research has shown that the number one reason most couples get divorced is growing apart and out of love. Only 18 percent of divorces are due to infidelity, while 44 percent are due to incompatibility or growing apart.

1Twenty80:

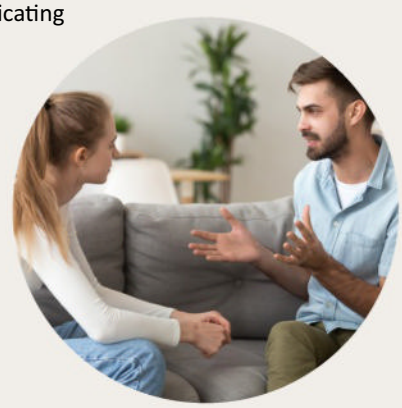
How do communication issues often contribute to marital problems, and what strategies do you recommend for improving communication between partners?

Faith:

I have always said this to my couples, what matters is really not what you say, but how you say it. You can say "Thank you" with no effect, or "THANK YOU" loudly, or "thanks" with a hint of sarcasm, or "Thank you" gently with appreciation. Same words, but the key is how we deliver them!

Couples that communicate better, stay together. But, many couples tend to start conversations harshly without even realising it. Psychologist John Gottman has claimed that he can predict with 90 percent accuracy whether a couple will get divorced just by listening to the first three minutes of a conversation.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that your partner knows what you need or want. Understand that your partner rarely knows what you're thinking or feeling, much less what you need. You have to express your needs clearly and positively so that your partner can truly understand how you feel and in turn help meet your needs. Many discussions start harshly due to tone of voice, volume, or words used. Therefore, it is important that you start the conversation by communicating your emotions and needs positively.



There is a saying "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." That is easier said than done, right? In fact, this may be the hardest to do in marriage because of the potential to be hurt by those we love.

Talking "at" someone often means you're trying to be heard. Talking "with" someone, on the other hand, means you are trying to understand each other. Yelling can make things even more complicated. Being yelled at activates the fight, flight, or freeze response and floods the body with stress hormones. When this happens, all nonessential systems shut down, like complex problem-solving abilities.

It's not that your spouse doesn't want to understand you. From a biological perspective, as research shows, they literally can't — at least not until things have calmed down.

> EVERY RELATIONSHIP REQUIRES SOME DEGREE OF FORGIVENESS FROM EVERYONE INVOLVED IN ORDER TO REMAIN STRONG.

1Twenty80:

Money conflicts can create significant tension in a marriage. What advice do you have for couples who struggle with financial disagreements and how can they find common ground?

Faith:

Arguments about money hamper many marriages. If you're committed to a relationship, you and your partner owe each other a calm, honest conversation about each other's finances, habits, goals, and anxieties.

Money problems involve discussions in which ego, anxieties about control, and notions of marital roles will have to be checked. When working together, couples can achieve more than singles can.

If debt is an issue, couples can employ various tools and strategies to start paying off debt and get on a better financial footing. Having kids changes everything; Ideally, couples should communicate their expectations and ideas about how to raise and pay for them well before they're born.

Couples who have trouble talking about money can seek out the help of a financial advisor or planner for unbiased advice.

1Twenty80:

What role does forgiveness play in healing and restoring a marriage? How can couples effectively work through past hurts and move forward in a healthy way?

Faith:

Every relationship requires some degree of forgiveness from everyone involved in order to remain strong. This is because we are all human. Our perceptions and behaviours are flawed, and feeling hurt is inevitable when it comes to being in relationships.

#1 FORGIVENESS IS A WAY TO LET GO AND MOVE ON TO A HAPPIER PLACE

Constantly attributing our present situation to something that happened in the past can end up trapping us in a victim mode. For example, Mary's husband left her a few years ago and she insists that her current state of unhappiness is because of that.

Then, one day, she comes to the realization that the only person she can rely on to improve her situation is herself. She says, "I have to solve this problem; I have to find a way to heal and to find happiness again in my life."

With that realization, she discovers again a sense of control over her life and finds the resilience to move on from past hurts.

#2 FORGIVENESS IS NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS OR AN ADMISSION OF DEFEAT

The bitter truth is that it is very likely that our forgiveness—or the lack of it—will not impact the life of the person that wronged us. We can be holding on to our anger and hurt, while the other person may be living a happy life instead.

How to begin the forgiveness journey?

- Acknowledge your anger and hurt.
- Accept that you cannot change the past.
- Set boundaries.
- Reflect on the part you played in the hurtful situation.
- Commit to forgiveness.

1Twenty80:

Many couples face challenges in maintaining a healthy balance between individuality and togetherness. How can couples strike a balance and nurture their individual interests while maintaining a strong marital bond?

Faith:

A healthy relationship is when the couple feels safe to relate deeply to one another. They feel generally secure, which means, they are comfortable with closeness and confidence depending on one another. They are good at seeking support and better at giving it. They feel safe connecting to their partner, easily get over the hurt their partner unavoidably.

1Twenty80:

Emotional intimacy often diminishes over time in a long-term relationship. How can couples reignite their emotional connection and foster a deep sense of intimacy?

Faith:

Here are some tips on building love:

- **Increase positive connections and intimacy** in the relationship, along with increasing **self-awareness** and **understanding** of your partner.
- Understand that intimacy means **closeness and connectedness**, and sharing each other's vulnerabilities - not just sex) set aside time every week to have a couple's date.
- **Do your part!** Don't focus on your spouse as the source of problems. Even if he/she plays a part in it, you still have a lot of control over what you can do to help the relationship.
- A healthy relationship requires **teamwork**. Keep the fun and friendship and make the relationship a safe haven. A healthy relationship is one where each member does their part.

- **You are responsible** for your own attitude and your own state of mind. Your actions are derived from how you choose to think about things.
- **Your attitude affects the way you respond.** How you see your partner affects how you will respond to them.

1Twenty80:

Sexual satisfaction and compatibility are important aspects of a relationship. How do you help couples address and improve their sexual intimacy and connection?

Faith:

Firstly, sex is an opportunity for couples to bond with one another. Affection helps us feel close and intimate with one another. Also, sex is pleasurable and fun. However, if either of the partners is feeling stressed or overwhelmed, they should communicate these feelings of stress with each other first. Discussing about how to manage time for sexual intimacy is important as your partner has to be consensual in engaging in sex at that time. It always boils down to their feelings and emotions during sexual engagement. As stress levels are managed well through communication, intimacy becomes natural.

1Twenty80:

Infidelity is a deeply challenging issue in a relationship. How do you support couples in processing the pain and rebuilding their relationship after an affair has occurred?

Faith:

It's no overstatement that an affair or betrayal can hit like an earthquake. It can shake the very foundation of a relationship. And the pain does not stop there. When this trust is dishonored it creates deep insecurity, fear, and uncertainty about the future of the very relationship that is most important to them.

Many betrayed partners find themselves in an emotional conflict with themselves. They look at their cheating partner and think:

- I love you, but I hate you.
- I need you close, but I can't stand to be in the same room as you.
- I want you to hold me and tell me everything is going to be OK, but if you did that, I wouldn't believe you.

Betrayal trauma is so unbelievably painful, the one person betrayed partners need to be able to trust in this moment of crisis can no longer be trusted.

For many couples, the finding of infidelity is often the wake-up call they need to finally address the unresolved relationship issues and emotional needs they have been overlooking for years. Couples report that only after working through the painful aftereffects of infidelity they are able, often for the first time in their relationship, to enjoy the kind of intimate connection they had feared they would never attain. We get stuck in believing that we have no power to change our lives, yet we do.

In therapy, we teach couples how to recognise the deeper emotional dynamics that are happening between them often below the visible surface, and how to emotionally reach for one another in ways that create safety, connection, and joy.

1Twenty80:

In your experience, what are some of the underlying factors that contribute to issues such as resentment, anger, or ongoing power struggles within a relationship? How do you address these underlying issues in therapy?

Faith:

Codependency breeds anger and resentment. When someone doesn't do what we want, we feel angry, victimised, unappreciated or uncared for, and powerless. Dependency also leads to fear of confrontation. With poor boundaries and communication skills, we don't express our needs and feelings.

Resentment in marriage happens due to the couple's inability to discuss past hurts without stirring up more anger. Resentment usually begins to build after a betrayal, constant inappropriate behaviors, or bad-mouthing.

Power struggles often manifest as a push to get your way on important matters where ideas or visions may differ. This may involve discounting your partner's viewpoint or needs, or crossing boundaries they have set.

Some of the best ways to deal with and address these challenges include maintaining open communication, learning how to forgive, and seeking professional counsel.

1Twenty80:

What's your opinion on the notion that couples should be able to solve problems themselves?

Faith:

Learning how to foster this emotional bond of love is vital to a lasting relationship. In my experience as a counselor, I have noticed that a common mistake couples make is to run away or give up too soon and avoid problems, hoping it will all go away. This running away, giving up, and avoidance behaviour eventually makes things worse.

I have noticed that Asian clients tend to seek help only at the eleventh hour, mainly because we still hold the idea of "Don't air your dirty laundry in public!" I understand the difficulty they have faced to overcome this belief in order to take this step. Many clients come in because they have exhausted all options and personal means of help.

Nevertheless, every couple is different and so when they choose to seek help it will depend on the nature of the issue they are facing. If a couple is worried about their relationship for whatever reason and feels that they are both unable to reach a conclusion alone, it is likely that they will benefit from couples counseling.

> EMOTIONAL BONDS BRING ABOUT TRUST AND SECURITY, KNOWING YOUR PARTNER WILL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR YOU NO MATTER WHAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

1Twenty80:

Lastly, in your opinion, what's the secret to a healthy marriage?

Faith:

Emotional bonds or healthy dependence is the core of romantic love, the most fundamental building block of a lasting relationship. A strong emotional bond allows you to feel confident and safe to share anything with your partner. This bond will help you and your partner develop empathy for one another. Emotional bonds bring about trust and security, knowing your partner will always be there for you no matter what the circumstances. They encourage forgiveness, engagement, and boost morale.

Another piece of advice for couples is, do not wait until you reach rock bottom before trying couples counselling. Many couples use counselling sessions as a way to keep their relationship healthy and to address underlying concerns that may become a conflict in the future. Early help brings early relief. In fact, allowing help is a sign of courage and maturity.

Remember, this is never an instant process. It builds slowly as the marriage continues to grow. In time, the marriage will become strong, and you will take a great deal of joy in what you have created. Understand that there is no ideal man or woman. There is no marriage made in heaven. Both partners must invest love, respect and trust in making a relationship work. Without this 'investment,' a harmonious relationship is unattainable. ■

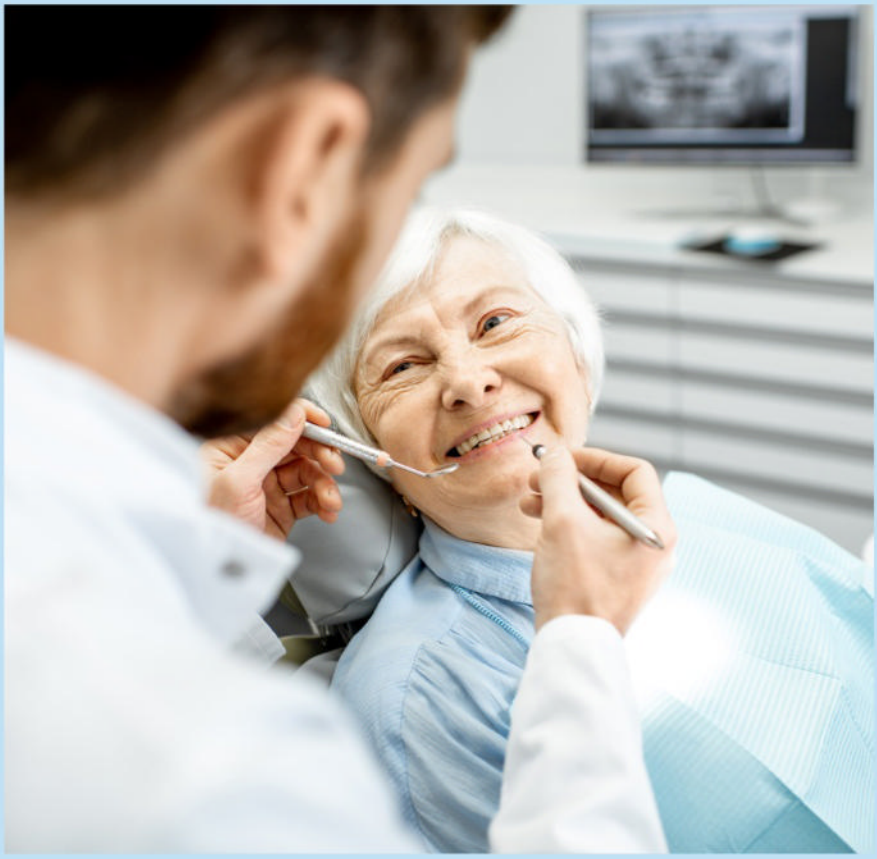
In addition to providing professional counselling, Faith Foo has also written motivational books for adults and children with relatable anecdotes, real life parallels and more. You can visit *www.faithfoocounseling.com* for further information.

Reference: Faith, F. (2020). I Love You, I Hate You. What is Wrong with Us? (1st ed.). Faith Foo Counseling.

Fail Oral Health, Frail General Health

The link you cannot ignore

By Dr. Jessica Francis



Frailty, commonly associated with ageing, encompasses a multidimensional syndrome characterised by increased vulnerability to stressors, diminished physiological reserves, and heightened risk of adverse health outcomes. While mental and physical frailty has been extensively studied, the connection between oral frailty and overall frailty has gained significant attention in recent years.

What is oral frailty?

Oral frailty comprises various oral health-related factors such as tooth loss, periodontal disease, oral infections, xerostomia (dry mouth), and impaired masticatory function. These conditions can result from a combination of factors, including age-related changes, chronic diseases, poor oral hygiene, and inadequate dental care. As individuals age, they are more likely to experience tooth loss, deterioration of oral tissues, and reduced saliva production, which can impact their overall oral health and well-being.

Emerging evidence suggests that poor oral health and dental conditions may contribute to the development of mental and physical frailty, forming a complex interrelationship that warrants further investigations. Studies have shown that oral frailty can contribute to mental frailty, including cognitive decline and mood disorders. Oral infections and chronic inflammation associated with periodontal disease have been linked to an increased risk of cognitive impairment, such as Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Moreover, tooth loss and oral pain can significantly impact an individual's nutritional intake, leading to malnutrition and subsequent frailty.

Oral frailty can also exacerbate physical frailty. Impaired masticatory function resulting from missing teeth or ill-fitting dentures can hinder adequate chewing, leading to difficulties in consuming a balanced diet. This nutritional deficiency can contribute to muscle weakness, reduced bone density, and frailty-related complications.

Conversely, mental, and physical frailty can also contribute to the development of oral frailty. Individuals experiencing mental frailty may neglect their oral hygiene practices, leading to a higher risk of periodontal disease and oral infections. Additionally, physical frailty can limit an individual's ability to access dental care, maintain regular dental visits, and perform proper oral self-care routines.

Several mechanisms underpin the relationship between oral frailty and mental and physical frailty. Chronic inflammation, often observed in periodontal disease, has been associated with systemic inflammation and oxidative stress, contributing to cognitive decline and physical frailty. Moreover, the shared risk factors between oral frailty and mental and physical frailty, such as aging, chronic diseases, and poor nutrition, further reinforce their interconnection.

Addressing oral frailty

Recognising the complex interplay between oral frailty and mental and physical frailty has significant implications for healthcare professionals, policy makers, and individuals themselves. Integrated healthcare models that prioritize oral health as an essential component of overall health and well-being are crucial. Oral health assessments should be included as part of routine geriatric evaluations, and dental care should be readily accessible, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Further research is needed to explore the causal pathways linking oral frailty to mental and physical frailty, as well as to identify effective interventions.

Implementing preventive measures, such as oral health education, regular dental check-ups, and early intervention for oral diseases, may help mitigate the impact of oral frailty on overall frailty.

In summary, oral frailty, encompassing various oral health-related factors, may contribute to the development of mental and physical frailty, and vice versa. Understanding the bidirectional relationship between oral frailty and overall frailty is essential for comprehensive healthcare approaches focused on healthy ageing. By addressing oral health needs alongside mental and physical health, we can enhance the well-being and quality of life for older adults, ultimately promoting healthy ageing in our society. ■

> ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS SHOULD BE INCLUDED AS PART OF ROUTINE GERIATRIC EVALUATIONS, AND DENTAL CARE SHOULD BE READILY ACCESSIBLE, PARTICULARLY FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.

Dr. Jessica is a Dental lecturer and Specialist in Special Care Dentistry, Faculty of Dentistry, Universiti Malaya. She completed her Bachelor of Dental Surgery (Malaya) in 2007, and Doctor of Clinical Dentistry (Special Needs Dentistry) (Melbourne) in 2016. She served the Ministry of Health from 2007 to 2021.

8 COMMON HOME EMERGENCIES

Small steps to making big differences

By Isabel Andrew

Accidents knock on the door without warnings or invitations. When it comes to a medical emergency, most of us are often hesitant to get involved for the fear that you might worsen the situation. Nevertheless, there are some simple steps we can take to mitigate the situation, while aid is on the way. Here are nine common home emergencies to prepare yourself for:

Scenario 1: CHOKING

What to do if your baby accidentally swallows a tiny piece of a toy or food:

1. Hold the baby face-down along your thigh with their head lower than their bottom.
2. Hit them firmly on their back between the shoulder blades up to five times.
3. Turn the baby over so they are facing upwards.
4. Place two fingers in the middle of their chest just below the nipples.
5. Push sharply downwards up to five times.
6. Call emergency services if the blockage does not dislodge.

What to do if an adult is choking on food:

1. Encourage them to cough.
2. Hit them firmly on their back with the heel of your hand between the shoulder blades five times.
3. Hold around the waist and pull inwards and upwards above their belly button. Give up to five abdominal thrusts.
4. Call emergency services if the blockage does not dislodge.

Scenario 2:
SEIZURES

What to do if your uncle has a seizure:

1. Pay attention to how long the seizure lasts.
2. Prevent injury by moving nearby objects out of the way.
3. Don’t hold the person down.
4. Don’t put anything in the person's mouth like water, food or pills.
5. Make sure their breathing is clear.
6. Call for emergency medical help.

Scenario 3:
FRACTURED LIMB

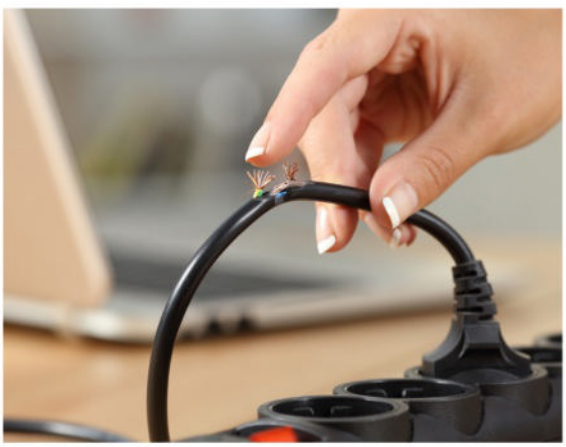
What to do if you fractured your arm after falling:

1. Minimise movement of the injured area.
2. Place some ice cubes or a cold pack on the injury for 20 minutes to ease the swelling or pain. Wrap the ice or cold pack with a thin towel prior to placing it on a fresh injury.
3. Tie or tape a rigid material (splint) next to the injury. The splint should sit at two joints nearest to the injured part.

Scenario 4:
ELECTROCUTION

What to do if your father accidentally touched a live wire:

1. Switch off the current. Never attempt to cut a cable with a knife or scissors.
2. Use dry insulating materials like gloves, folded garments, or newspapers.



Scenario 5:
POISONING

What to do if your younger sister accidentally drinks poison:

1. If she is vomiting, turn his or her head to the side to prevent choking.
2. Begin CPR if she doesn't show signs of life.
3. Gather the bottle, package or label of the poison.
4. Call emergency services.

Scenario 6:
BURNS

What to do if your mother accidentally burns her hand in the kitchen:

1. Cool the burn with cool or lukewarm running water for 20 minutes. Don't use ice, iced water, or any creams.
2. Remove any clothing or jewellery that's near the burnt area of the skin.
3. Do not break a blister.
4. If the blister does break, clean it with mild soap and water. Apply an antiseptic ointment, and then cover it with bandage or gauze.
5. Applying aloe vera gel or other pain relief gels may provide temporary relief.

Scenario 7:
STROKE

What to do if your grandmother has a sudden stroke:

1. Spot FAST :
   - F - Facial drooping
   - A - Arm weakness
   - S - Slurred speech
   - T - Telephone an emergency hotline
2. Do not feed the person any drinks or food. If you suspect the person is having low sugar, rub something sweet like honey or sugar syrup on their lips.

Scenario 8:
HEART ATTACK

What to do if your grandfather has a heart attack:

1. Calm the person, make them sit and loosen any tight clothing.
2. If the person has heart attack medication, pop it under the tongue.
3. If the person is unconscious, begin Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR):
   - Call for medical assistance.
   - Lay the person on their back and open their airway.
   - Check for breathing. If they are not breathing, start CPR.
   - Perform 30 chest compressions.
   - Perform two rescue breaths.
   - Repeat until help arrives.
4. Seek medical help immediately.

If your gut feeling says to get help, listen to it! Here are a few digits to keep on speed dial in case you need a healthcare expert on the scene:

Call Malaysia Emergency Response Services (MERS) at 999 to reach:

- Royal Malaysian Police (RMP)
- Fire and Rescue Department of Malaysia (FRDM) or call 994
- Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH)
- Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA)
- Department of Civil Defence (DCD) or call 991

We hope with this know-how on handling medical home emergencies, you will be better prepared for unforeseen circumstances. If the situation is grave, do remember to call for medical aid. ■

Sources: Malaysia.gov.my, Health for Teens, St John Ambulance, World Health Organization, WebMD

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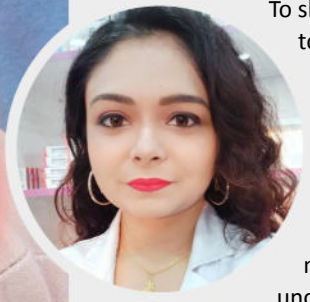
FROM ACHE TO ACE

Insights from a pharmacist on supplements for knee pain

By Yasanthi Devi

With knee pain affecting millions worldwide, finding effective and safe solutions becomes crucial for a better quality of life. In this article, we explore the potential of supplements to provide relief and support, offering alternative paths for people out there.



To shed further light on this topic, we've invited Dhrunisa Girish Kumar, a community pharmacist and Founder of 1 Care Pharmacy, Melaka to provide valuable insights for those navigating the realm of knee pain management. Get ready to uncover new possibilities and deepen your understanding of how supplements can play a role in addressing knee pain. Join us as we embark on this enlightening expedition with our expert guide.

1Twenty80:

CAN SUPPLEMENTS HELP WITH MANAGING KNEE PAIN?

Dhrunisa Girish Kumar:

Yes, supplements can help with managing knee pain by slowing down the process of cartilage loss as well as easing stiffness, swelling, inflammation, and pain. Moreover, constant intake of supplements will help in cartilage build-up and improve knee health.

1Twenty80:

WHAT ARE THE COMMONLY RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTS FOR KNEE PAIN, AND HOW DO THEY HELP?

Dhrunisa:

GLUCOSAMINE

Glucosamine is an amino sugar which is a natural part of the cartilage in your joints. Taking it as a supplement may help to build and repair cartilage, tendon, and the synovial fluid around joints.

CHONDROITIN

Chondroitin is a natural part of the connective tissue in bones and cartilage. When taken as a supplement, it can help boost the collagen in joints to help absorb shock better. It may help hold water in cartilage too. That can make the tissue operate more smoothly. A little extra chondroitin could also help protect from cartilage loss. The supplement form comes from animal cartilage.

TYPE II COLLAGEN

Type II collagen naturally occurs in the body as a major building block of joint cartilage. As a supplement, it is available in 2 forms: undenatured and hydrolysed. However, they are not the same. Hydrolyzed collagen is processed with a high degree of heat, acid, and enzymes, which severely reduces its therapeutic benefits. Look for supplements with undenatured collagen, which is minimally processed to provide a high concentration of peptides for cartilage restoration.

FISH OIL

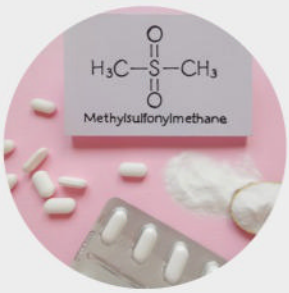
Fish oil helps to block proteins and fatty acids that can turn on inflammation. The body turns them into anti-inflammatory chemicals called resolvins that can help reduce joint stiffness and tenderness.

BOSWELLIA SERRATA

Boswellia Serrata known as frankincense, is a resin used in traditional Ayurvedic medicine to relieve joint stiffness and discomfort. Studies indicate that boswellic acid compounds contained within this herbal extract are responsible for its anti-inflammatory properties.

METHYLSULFONYLMETHANE (MSM)

Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM), a sulfuric compound can be consumed through supplements and is also naturally present in fruits, vegetables, grains, animals, and humans. Sulfur helps the body to produce connective tissue. Taking MSM can help to ease symptoms of knee pain and swelling.



CURCUMIN

Curcumin is a polyphenol that gives turmeric its vibrant yellow colour. Curcumin blocks certain proteins that can cause inflammation. Over time, it can help to reduce joints ache and help you move better.

AVOCADO SOYBEAN UNSAPONIFIABLES (ASU)

Joints are lined with synovial cells. ASU helps protect synovial cells so that they can promote healthy connective tissue. Studies show that over time, people with osteoarthritis who take ASU supplements may need less pain medication than they did before.

1Twenty80:

ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC DIETARY RESTRICTIONS OR CONSIDERATIONS THAT INDIVIDUALS SHOULD KEEP IN MIND WHEN TAKING THESE SUPPLEMENTS FOR KNEE PAIN?

Dhrunisa:

People with knee pain should try to avoid some foods, as they may aggravate the condition further. Below are some examples:

SUGAR

Sugar apart from contributing to weight gain, can also trigger the release of cells that can increase inflammation. Other foods containing highly refined carbohydrates, such as white bread, may have the same effect.

SALT

Salt can cause cells to attract water, which could aggravate knee pain. Joint swelling is a common symptom of knee pain. Consuming too much salt can worsen this swelling. Processed and pre-packaged foods often contain high levels of salt.

TRANS-FATS AND SATURATED FATS

Trans-fats and saturated fats are common in processed foods but they can trigger inflammation. Omega-3 may help people with knee pain but omega-6 fatty acids which occur in various types of cooking oil might boost the body's production of inflammatory chemicals. Examples of oils containing omega-6 include corn and sunflower oils. The Arthritis Foundation recommends limiting alcohol intake and avoiding smoking. Alcohol may interact with some medications, including pain-relief drugs.

1Twenty80:

HOW LONG SHOULD SOMEONE TAKE A SUPPLEMENT BEFORE THEY CAN EXPECT TO SEE IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR KNEE PAIN?

Dhrunisa:

The ingredient in most joint health products can provide some noticeable relief within 30 days. However, it may take additional time to provide your body with the nutrients necessary to naturally revitalize damaged cartilage and strengthen joints. Research suggests that 3 months of daily use helps significantly increase the likelihood of lasting improvement. Here is a reasonable timeline to expect:

MONTH 1: You may experience less joint discomfort during your daily routine at work and while performing household tasks.

MONTH 2: You may feel your joints growing stronger and more stable with a greater range of motion, allowing you to keep moving comfortably.

MONTH 3: Peak cartilage support is reached. With improved mobility and stamina, you may notice a newfound confidence in your joints that allows you to once again engage in the sports and activities you love.

For best results, focus on consistency. Adding an effective joint supplement to your daily routine for at least 3 months promotes exponential improvement, as each dose builds on the benefits of the last.

1Twenty80:

ARE THERE ANY INTERACTIONS OR CONTRAINDICATIONS BETWEEN CERTAIN SUPPLEMENTS AND COMMON MEDICATIONS FOR KNEE PAIN?

Dhrunisa:

Taking glucosamine and paracetamol together might reduce the effectiveness of both the supplement and medication.

Taking fish oil or glucosamine alone, or in combination with chondroitin might increase the effects of the anticoagulant and antiplatelet, which can increase the risk of bleeding.
The public is highly advised to talk to their physician or pharmacist before consuming any supplement.

1Twenty80:

ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS THAT INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE AWARE OF AND PAY ATTENTION TO WHILE USING THESE SUPPLEMENTS FOR KNEE PAIN?

Dhrunisa:

Worsening of any of the conditions that are mentioned below must be observed closely in order to ensure the supplement is working accordingly or otherwise.

- Swelling and stiffness.
- Redness and warmth to touch.
- Weakness or instability.
- Popping or crunching noises.
- Inability to fully straighten the knee.

1Twenty80:

WHAT SHOULD INDIVIDUALS DO IF THEY EXPERIENCE NO IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR KNEE PAIN AFTER USING SUPPLEMENTS FOR A CERTAIN PERIOD OF TIME?

Dhrunisa:

Please consult with your physician and pharmacist for further knee pain management in terms of medicine regime and change of supplement.

1Twenty80:

ARE THERE ANY LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS OR OTHER COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENTS THAT CAN BE COMBINED WITH SUPPLEMENTS FOR BETTER RESULTS IN MANAGING KNEE PAIN?

Dhrunisa:

Exercises to strengthen and stretch the knee may help to reduce pain and inflammation. The most appropriate exercises for knee pain will depend on its cause and should be tailored to the individual.

Possible exercises include:

➡ QUAD STRETCH

Stretching the quadriceps can help to reduce pressure on the knee joint.

1. Stand with a nearby sturdy chair for balance and support.
2. Starting with the feet (shoulder-width apart), take a step backward with the right foot. Keep the posture straight and tuck the buttocks in to create a straight line with your body.
3. Bend your knees slightly and you might feel a stretch in the front of the legs.
4. Hold this stretch for 10 seconds, then repeat to stretch the other leg.

➡ HAMSTRING STRETCH

This exercise releases tension in the back of the leg with a seated stretch.

1. Start with a foot flat on the floor, then extend one leg forward, flexing the foot backward.
2. Lean slightly forward to feel a stretch in the back of the leg.

➡ HALF SQUATS

Half squats are a way to strengthen the front of the legs without putting excess strain on the knees.

1. Start with the feet shoulder-width apart and the arms extended about shoulder height.
2. Bend at the knees slightly, just enough to engage the quadriceps muscles (thighs).
3. Hold this position for roughly 5 seconds, then straighten the knees to a standing position.

1Twenty80:

WHAT MEASURES CAN INDIVIDUALS TAKE TO ENSURE THEY ARE PURCHASING PRODUCTS FROM RELIABLE AND TRUSTWORTHY SOURCES?

Dhrunisa:

It is advisable for consumers to buy from pharmacy outlets with the supervision of a registered and knowledgeable pharmacist.

Products registered with the Ministry of Health usually come with a hologram on the product itself. The authenticity of the hologram can always be checked at any nearby community pharmacy to avoid consuming any counterfeit product.

Consumers always can check the product registration online via *www.bpfk.gov.my*. ■

Tips & Tricks To Master Effective Communication

Listen to speak

By Yasanthi Devi

A successful interpersonal and intrapersonal connection depends on effective communication. But the power of excellent communication doesn't end there. Being able to speak effectively helps you in important life situations, including job interviews, business meetings, romantic relationships, friendships, and even internal monologues!

Eloquent and articulate communication is a lifelong skill with no expiration date. As long as you are surrounded by humans and grace this earth with your presence, you will always communicate both with yourself and those around you.

While effective communication may seem instinctive, not everyone gets it right all the time. Sometimes, things can go awry when someone misunderstands or misinterprets what we're trying to say. This may lead to misunderstandings and conflicts.

For a clear conversation, it's worthwhile to learn some important skills. With that in mind, here are some tips for communicating effectively:

#1 Keep a ear out and listen

Active listening is the key to a healthy and balanced conversation. While we do have a say or two in a conversation or tense situation, it's also good to listen to what's being said. This ensures that you're listening to the other party, and they're most likely to return the favour as well.

It will do you good to remember that active listening is a two-way street. If you want to be heard, you have to be willing to listen as well. Attentive listening will also make others feel seen and heard.

TIPS TO BE A GOOD LISTENER:

- Be a safe space for your loved ones.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Be comfortable with silence.
- Ask thoughtful questions.
- Validate their feelings.

#2
Focus on the speaker

When someone is speaking to you, be sure to focus your full attention on them so you can understand the message that they're trying to convey. When you are chatting with someone, keeping your attention fully on them allows you to understand the meaning behind their words, reducing the possibility of miscommunication.

TIPS TO IMPROVE FOCUS WHEN SOMEONE IS SPEAKING TO YOU:

- Avoid checking your phone.
- Try not to fidget.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Nod to signal that you're following the conversation.

#3
Try to set aside judgement

It can be difficult to have a conversation with someone whose opinions differ from our own or with whom we might not agree. But it's these very contrasts that make the discussion more complex and widen our understanding of the variety of people in the world.

We don't necessarily have to share the same opinions as the other person in order to interact with them effectively. Empathy and agreement are very different things. Being able to see things from another person's point of view demonstrates maturity and strong empathy.

TIPS TO PRACTISE NON-JUDGEMENTAL BEHAVIOUR:

- Understand cultural differences.
- Ensure that you're in the right state of mind to be able to communicate effectively.
- Accept the fact that humans make mistakes and we can learn from the mistakes to be better.

#4
Manage your own emotions effectively

You need to be mentally, emotionally, and physically present to have a healthy conversation. This means that depending on the situation, you must be able to effectively accept and process emotions.

Allowing your emotions to take over can lead to misunderstandings or conflict, especially during vulnerable conversations or in professional settings. It hurts far worse when you act cruelly towards a helpless person. As a result, they might withdraw, and it might take more work to gain their trust and persuade them to open up again.

TIPS TO MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS EFFECTIVELY:

- If you're not in the right frame of mind to have a healthy conversation, let the speaker know in advance.
- Don't feel bad for postponing important conversations, as it gives you time to center yourself.
- It's okay to practise boundaries.

Whether you're having an internal thought or a heart-to-heart with a loved one, we hope these suggestions will be helpful in your next chat. Remember that communication is key, but what opens the lock quicker is effective communication. ■

Firra Fruit:
Fortify your ferrum needs

Here's why maintaining iron levels is vital

By Isabel Andrew

Did you know, according to the World Health Organisation, 29.9 percent of women aged between 15 to 49 suffered anaemia in 2019?

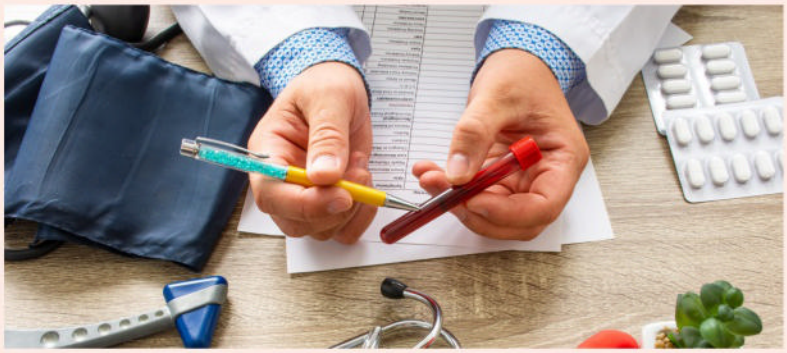
Additionally, 19.3 percent to 57.4 percent of pregnant Malaysian women suffered from anaemia in 2022.

In case you are unfamiliar with anaemia, it is a medical condition linked to the levels of iron in your body. How does it specifically impact pregnant women? Let's delve into these questions to gain a better understanding.

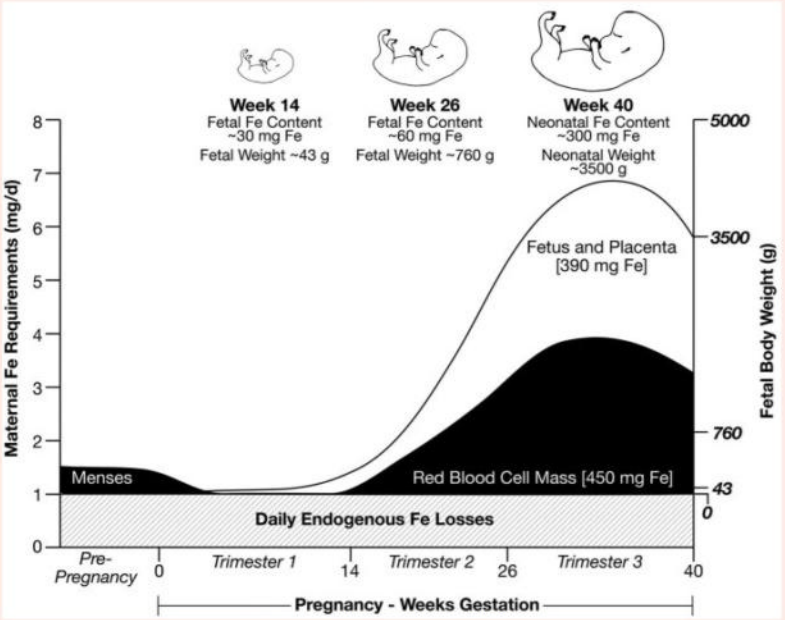
What is Iron Deficiency Anaemia (IDA)?

Anaemia is a condition in which your body doesn't have enough healthy red blood cells (RBC). Haemoglobin, a protein found inside RBCs, is in charge of delivering oxygen to the body's tissues. Therefore, a low RBC count indicates that there is less haemoglobin carrying less oxygen.

How does IDA come into play? The most prevalent kind of anaemia is IDA. As the name implies, this illness develops when your body is deficient in iron, which is necessary for producing enough haemoglobin.



Why do pregnant and lactating mums need iron?



Source: O'Brien, K.O., Thomas, C.E. (2018). Iron Requirements and Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes. In: Lammi-Keefe, C., Couch, S., Kirwan, J. (eds) Handbook of Nutrition and Pregnancy. Nutrition and Health. Humana Press, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90988-2_2

During pregnancy, the mother's blood volume increases. This means pregnant mothers require more iron to produce additional haemoglobin so that the baby has increased oxygen.

Mothers will inevitably lose iron during their second and third trimesters. This may significantly raise their risk of developing IDA. Due to iron scarcity, there is a high possibility of preterm birth, low birth weight, and postpartum depression.

What about lactating mothers? As nutritious as it can be, breast milk contains relatively little iron. Even after giving birth, mothers need to supplement their iron intake.Mothers, your mood may be affected if you're having low iron levels, which in turn may impact bonding periods with your child. You may be more likely to experience postpartum depression and feel irritable if you are iron deficient. Additionally, it is more challenging to nurse when you are exhausted.

IDA can manifest itself through:

- Paleness.
- Shortness of breath.
- Headaches and dizziness.
- Brittle or spoon-shaped fingernails.
- Cold hands and feet.
- Dry and damaged hair and skin.

If you're on your way to purchase some much needed iron supplies, be aware. While meeting the body's fundamental need for iron, the majority of conventional iron formulations may have undesirable side effects including:

- Stomach pain and irritation
- Constipation.
- Heartburn.
- Nausea.
- Black stools.

How can Firra Fruit help?

Firra Fruit is a clinically proven iron formulation designed to give you an iron level-up. According to Wellesta Truelife, an innovative nutraceuticals provider, the production of Firra Fruit was made possible by an advanced food processing technique known as microencapsulation.

This means that each time you have a glass of Firra Fruit, its iron content can be absorbed entirely into your body. Besides preventing the wastage of unabsorbed iron, Firra Fruit can also prevent digestive tract irritation and subsequently constipation.

Let's talk about its ingredients. Firra Fruit is fortified with the iron elements of ferric pyrophosphate, which are encapsulated in lecithin Liposomes. In addition to strengthening your immune system, Firra Fruit's Vitamin C content can also reduce your risk of suffering from iron-deficiency anaemia in pregnancy.

The best part, unlike most traditional compositions, Firra Fruit is presented in a delicious apple flavour. So you can bid farewell to the discomforting taste of metal and enjoy this with ease.

> THIS MEANS THAT EACH TIME YOU HAVE A GLASS OF FIRRA FRUIT, ITS IRON CONTENT CAN BE ABSORBED ENTIRELY INTO YOUR BODY.

Who can consider Firra Fruit?

Firra Fruit can be consumed by:

- Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.
- Children (2 years and above).
- Menstruating women.
- Vegetarians.
- Diabetic patients.
- Dialysis patients.
- Those with Chronic Kidney Diseases.
- Those with Iron Deficiency Anaemia.

Gentle reminder

Though many are unaware, IDA is a prevalent issue among expectant and postpartum moms. If you are experiencing symptoms of IDA, please make haste to see your nearest healthcare provider. If you're thinking about acquiring some iron supplements, talk to your local pharmacist to learn more about your options.

Take care of yourselves, dear mummies! ■

To know more about Firra Fruit, you can visit: *www.true-lifesciences.com/product/firra-fruit/*

Sources:

1. Abd Rahman, R., Idris, I. B., Isa, Z. M., Rahman, R. A., & Mahdy, Z. A. (2022). The Prevalence and Risk Factors of Iron Deficiency Anemia Among Pregnant Women in Malaysia: A Systematic Review. Frontiers in nutrition, 9, 847693. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2022.847693
2. World Health Organisation

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Piercing aftercare

Be stylish and responsible

By Isabel Andrew

It's a common practice for some parents to don their children with jewellery at a young age. In the wild phases of teenage and adulthood, piercings become a fun way to add edge. Nevertheless, whether it's your first or last embellishment, here's a refresher on before and after piercing care.

Before your piercing

Once you've decided on your desired type of piercing, the next step is to do your homework about the do-s and don'ts. Ensure that:

- The shop and piercers are reputable and licensed.
- The piercers take proper safety precautions, like wearing medical-grade gloves and washing their hands.
- The equipment used for each piercing is new and sterile.

After your piercing

Now that the exciting part is over, it's time to be extra responsible to maintain your new look. Follow these tips for the first few weeks:

- Always wash your hands before touching the piercing area.
- Wash your piercings with mild, fragrance-free soap and water at least once a day. For oral piercings, use antiseptic mouthwash.
- Apply a thin coat of petroleum jelly around each piercing as moist wounds heal faster.
- Clean the skin around the pierced area with a cotton pad dipped in a salt solution.
- Don't sleep or lie on the pierced area for long periods of time to avoid injuries or inflammations.
- Keep the jewellery in place, even at night, to prevent the hole from closing. You can 'turn' the piercing around but only when it's wet.

What an infection can look like?

Despite all attempts, sometimes an infection is inevitable. Even hypoallergenic materials such as gold and sterling silver may cause allergic reactions in some cases. The typical symptoms of an infected piercing are:

- Aching or throbbing pain.
- Swelling.
- Redness.
- Itching.
- Burning.
- Abnormal yellowish or whitish discharge.

See a doctor or board-certified dermatologist immediately if you think your piercing is infected. We hope this list of piercing do's and don'ts is helpful for your piercing journey.

Sources: MyHealth, Healthline, Mayo Clinic, American Academy of Dermatology, ELLE

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Bright Future, Bright Eyes

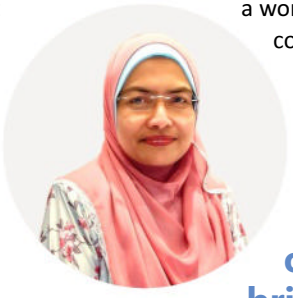
Insights from an ophthalmologist on safeguarding your child's vision

By Yasanthi Devi

Peering into the world through a child's eyes is a captivating experience, but ensuring their visual well-being is a responsibility that cannot be overlooked. In this illuminating article, we have the privilege of sitting down with Dr. Azura Ramlee, Consultant Ophthalmologist (Adult and Paediatrics) from Prince Court Medical Centre to further uncover this topic.

With a keen focus on uncovering the secrets to optimal eye health in children, we delve into a thought-provoking discussion that unveils the importance of early detection, dispels common misconceptions, and reveals invaluable strategies for preserving and nurturing your child's precious vision.

Get ready to delve into a captivating conversation that will open your eyes to a world of possibilities when it comes to safeguarding your child's ocular future.



1Twenty80:

At what age should parents or guardians bring their children for their first eye exam?

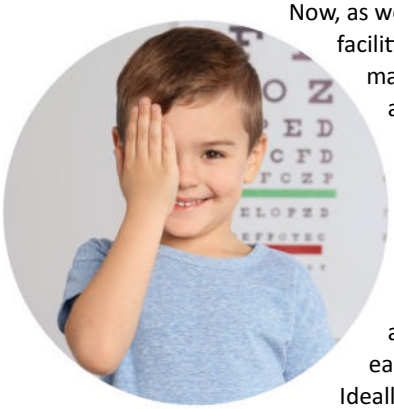
Dr. Azura Ramlee:

Parents or guardians can bring their children for their first eye exam as soon as they observe any eye symptoms. A child may complain or voluntarily

observe any eye condition. At this moment, an assessment should be done as early as possible regardless of age.

In fact, when a child is born, the pediatrician in charge would have done a quick screening of the child's eyes to exclude any congenital eye deformities or provide due referrals at that point if needed.

In a child whose vision is normal, ideally, the first eye check would be before they go to kindergarten. In some countries, the child would go for their first eye exam at an even earlier age. Currently, in Malaysia, kids get eye screening when they are in Standard 1.



Now, as we progress, facilities are made more available and this has enabled the child to be screened at an even earlier age. Ideally, getting an eye screen at the age of 4 to 5 before they enter kindergarten is good. This can be done with an ophthalmologist or optometrist at private centres.

It's also important to highlight that every child gets their rightful screening at the age of 7 years old (or Standard 1) in schools. This programme is already in place with the school team consisting of teachers who are trained to screen and detect their students who have a suboptimal vision.

We are working towards implementing eye screening in children at kindergartens to detect who might be having suboptimal vision so that these students can be referred earlier if necessary.

Are there any signs or symptoms that parents or guardians should be looking out for to indicate that their child may be experiencing vision problems?

Dr. Azura Ramlee:

Children these days are very smart and sometimes they voluntarily tell their parents if they're experiencing blurred vision. As for kids who may not be aware that they're experiencing blurred vision in one or both eyes, this can be detected when they go for screening.

Parents and guardians should also be on the lookout for obvious eye findings such as eye swelling, eye redness, or anything abnormal that is visible. Other than obvious findings, subtle eye findings are also important to take note of. These subtle findings can be:

Abnormal head posture

This abnormal head posture will be consistently observed when the child is attempting to focus. This may indicate either the child has a refractive error or any ocular misalignment.

Intermittent eye rubbing

The eye rubbing may be subtle at times, however, it's important to observe whether it's done repeatedly or the eye rubbing happens during a specific time of the day. In this case, the child may be dealing with allergic eye problems and should see an eye doctor for treatment.

Ocular misalignment

Normally, our eyes should be aligned in all directions of gaze. If you notice your child's eyes deviating, seeing an eye doctor is advisable as early treatment may prevent amblyopia (lazy eyes).

Frequent eye blinking

Frequent eye blinking in children is common nowadays due to digital eye strain. This is something many parents are observing in their kids. While artificial tears may help to relieve the symptoms, the root cause has to be addressed. Managing screen time well will be the definitive treatment.

There are less common but more visually threatening conditions that should also be taken note of by parents, such as

White pupil reflex

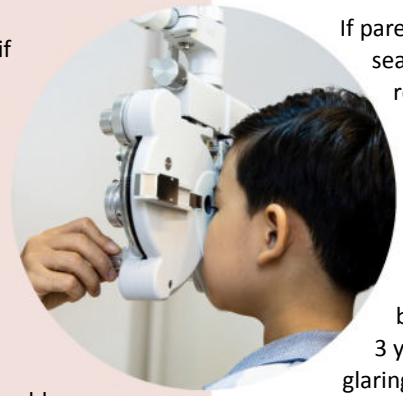
Usually, during feeding time, parents would engage in eye contact with their children. White pupil reflex is a condition where the pupil of the eye appears white instead of the usual dark colour. If white pupil reflex is present, parents should urgently bring in their child to meet an eye doctor to seek further treatment. It could be a cataract or a more serious condition involving the retina. Retinoblastoma is an eye cancer in children which can be life-threatening.

1Twenty80:

How often should parents or guardians bring their children in for eye exams as they grow and develop?

Dr. Azura Ramlee:

If the child is symptomatic, parents should bring the child to see an eye doctor immediately. The subsequent follow-ups and management depend on the child's eye condition.



On the other hand, if a child has gotten an eye assessment when they are four or five years old and the outcome is normal, the next eye screening will be done in primary school.

An older child will be able to inform if they're experiencing blurred vision. However, parents still play an important role in monitoring any abnormalities in their children's vision and bring their children to an eye doctor to have it checked.

> IF THE CHILD IS SYMPTOMATIC, PARENTS SHOULD BRING THE CHILD TO SEE AN EYE DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY. THE SUBSEQUENT FOLLOW-UPS AND MANAGEMENT DEPEND ON THE CHILD'S EYE CONDITION.

1Twenty80:

Are there any steps parents or guardians can take to help prevent their child from developing vision problems?

Dr. Azura Ramlee:

I love this question! It gives me an opportunity to emphasize to parents that they should try and avoid the early introduction of gadgets among kids.

If parents were to search online for the recommended screen time for kids, guidelines may slightly differ. However, generally, most guidelines agree that there should not be screen time for kids before the age of 2 to 3 years old. Something glaring these days is a lot of young kids are holding gadgets such as tablets or handphones in their hands. If we can change that, there would be a lot of things we can prevent.

As a rough guide, I would say if the child is around 5 to 7 years old, parents can consider allowing the child one to two hours of total screen time, per day. This screen time can gradually increase as the kids age but please don't go beyond 4 hours of total screen time per day, at least until the kids are around 12 years old. This is one practical way parents can prevent their children from developing vision problems. Another approach parents can consider is to implement minimal gadgets usage during school days and allow play time with gadgets for two hours per day during the weekends.

Another aspect to take note of is also the social development of the kids. When the child is so engrossed in using gadgets, this may impact their communication abilities and their emotional development.

There is strong evidence to suggest spending time in outdoor activities for two to three hours per-day is beneficial to prevent the progression of myopia in children. Evidence shows that when children are using gadgets, most of the time they are indoors.

This limits them from carrying out outdoor activities. Many studies have shown, kids spending two to three hours per day outdoors are able to buffer the progression of short-sightedness.

We live in Malaysia with an abundance of sun! However, please be mindful of the current heat wave situation as well.

Parents can also consider using the 'mirroring' feature on their devices to project to a bigger screen such as a smart television. By doing this, the child is not so engrossed to the small screen and indirectly, the '20 20 20' rule is being implemented as they can be easily distracted by surrounding movements.

On a separate note, potential trauma to the eyes is another aspect parents should be aware of. If the child is participating in a sport or activity that can expose them to blunt injuries such as badminton or cycling, parents are recommended to equip their children with protective eye gear.

> A BALANCED AND HEALTHY DIET IS KEY. PARENTS ARE RECOMMENDED TO PROVIDE THEIR KIDS WITH HEALTHY DIETS THROUGHOUT THEIR CHILDHOOD YEARS, WITHOUT GIVING UP.

1Twenty80:

What are some common vision problems that children experience, and what are the symptoms and treatment options for each?

Dr. Azura Ramlee:

Some of the most common ocular conditions among kids include:

Refractive error and astigmatism

The most common refractive error we're observing right now would be myopia (short-sightedness) followed by astigmatism. Here's where early screening when the child enters kindergarten helps.

Some may perceive refractive errors as trivial, however, if the child's eye power is high and it goes undetected, this is a potent cause of amblyopia (also known as lazy eyes). With the right prescription of glasses, these children can see better. The eye doctor may decide to add a specific eye drop to minimize the progress of short-sightedness if indicated.

Digital eye strain among kids

The best treatment for this would be to abstain from devices. The practice of using blue filter lenses for comfort viewing may contribute to longer screen time. Blue light filter lenses have not been proven to be helpful to children's eyes.

Allergy eye conditions

Children usually develop allergic eye conditions around the age of 5 years old. They are often with symptoms like intermittent eye rubbing due to itchiness, teary eyes, and eye discharge. Please bring your child to see an eye doctor as eye drops may alleviate the symptoms effectively.

1Twenty80:

What role do diet and nutrition play in maintaining healthy eyesight in children?

Dr. Azura Ramlee:

A balanced and healthy diet is key. Parents are recommended to provide their kids with healthy diets throughout their childhood years, without giving up. There are certain properties that are beneficial in promoting eye health such as:

- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin E
- Omega 3 fatty acids
- Zinc
- Lutein and zeaxanthin

These properties can be found in:

- Vegetables such as Sawi, Kangkung, Kailan, and Spinach.

- Beans and peas.
- Nuts.
- Fishes, lean meats, eggs and milk.

- Oranges, guava, pineapple, and mangos. ■

French fries VS Sweet potato fries

A questionable twist to a fan favourite

By Isabel Andrew

Fries can be considered a common determinant of how many stars a food franchise gets. If the fries aren't fresh, crispy, salty, or even curly enough, it's no surprise to see people walk out and never turn back.

The fan favourite French Fries are made from white potatoes. A well-known healthier option is sweet potato fries.

However, sweet potato fries are often deep-fried in unhealthy and reused oils. Now, it's not so healthy, is it? Well, let's find out!

Round 1: Macronutrients

Basically, both sweet potatoes and white potatoes clock in around the same number of calories, about 100 to 120 calories.

Round 2: Nutritional value

Sweet potatoes are often thought to be more nourishing than white potatoes. On the contrary, both types can be highly nutritious.

WHITE POTATOES:

- They're high in iron and vitamin C.
- Has less natural sugar.
- Contains a higher content of potassium.

SWEET POTATOES:

- They're high in fibre and calcium.
- Especially high in vitamin A. According to the US National Institutes of Health, just one whole baked sweet potato will give you more than a day's worth of vitamin A.
- The red and purple varieties are similarly rich in antioxidants. This can help the body fight cell damage which is brought about by free radicals.

Round 3: Preparation

So, the tie-breaker is how your potatoes are being prepared. Deep-fried potatoes are certainly not the healthy version of cooking your fries. This is because when you drown them in cooking oil, their calories, carbs and fat content shoot up.

Reusing the same frying oil can also create trans fats that can seep into the food. In some studies, deep frying was found to increase the amount of carcinogens too!

How to prepare them healthily:

- Mash them with butter and cream.
- Boil or bake them. Try keeping the skin on for more fibre, and serve with fresh herbs or spices instead of cheese, butter, and salt. This way you wouldn't have to worry about your sodium intake, calorie count as well as your blood sugar level too much.
- Air frying them is by far the healthiest and arguably the quickest option. That's because air-frying uses minimal amounts of oil, even one tablespoon of olive oil can do the trick.

We hope you got to learn a thing or two about choosing healthier Fries! If you happen to have a homemade batch, mind sending us some?

Sources: Healthline, WebMD, Medical News Today, Men's Health

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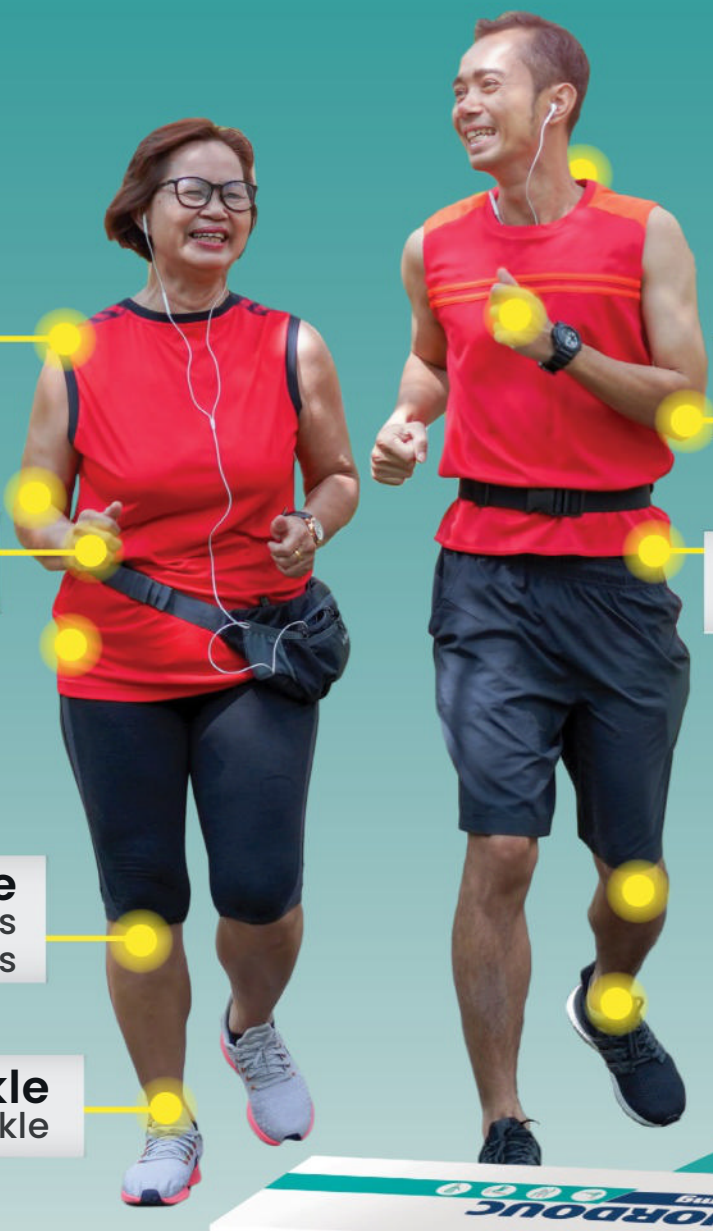

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4 Must-Visit Wonders of the World

For all the wanderlust wonderers out there

By Yasanthi Devi

The New Seven Wonders of the World represents a collection of extraordinary and awe-inspiring architectural marvels that have captivated the world with their beauty, historical significance, and cultural importance. These wonders, chosen through a global poll, symbolise the remarkable achievements of human ingenuity and artistic expression. Let's embark on a journey to explore the New Seven Wonders of the World and marvel at these iconic sites that continue to inspire wonder and admiration.

Before we venture further, have you ever wondered how the 7 Wonders of the World were chosen?

Your vote matters

The New 7 Wonders Foundation conducted a global survey to determine the New Seven Wonders of the World. The initiative was started in 2000 by the foundation under the direction of Swiss explorer and director Bernard Weber with the aim of finding and honouring the most outstanding and iconic buildings of our time. Millions of voters from all over the world participated in the selection process to come up with the final list.

An expert team selected the 21 contenders (based on multiple criteria) for the worldwide vote's shortlist before the voting began. The public was informed of the 21 contenders that had been shortlisted, and over the course of several years, a global voting procedure allowed participants from all over the world to participate and vote for the structures they preferred.

Now that we know the science behind the chosen wonders, let’s delve into the list (in no particular order)!

#1
CHICHÉN ITZÁ, MEXICO

In the 9th and 10th centuries CE, Chichén Itzá, a magnificent Mayan archaeological site, flourished in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. As a reflection of the city's cultural and historical importance, the complex features a blend of Mayan and Toltec architectural styles. El Castillo, popularly known as the beautiful Pyramid of Kukulcan, is located in the centre of Chichén Itzá. With its precise alignment to celestial occurrences, this landmark stands as a tribute to the superior understanding and astronomical accomplishments of the Mayan civilisation.

Chichén Itzá has a number of other spectacular structures in addition to the Pyramid. The Temple of the Warriors is notable for its rows of stone columns and fine carvings. The Great Ballcourt, one of Mesoamerica's biggest ballcourts, gives information on the first ball games played by the Mayans.

The Temple of the Thousand Columns, a sizable building covered in elaborate reliefs and said to have served as a ceremonial and administrative centre, is one of the site's most remarkable aspects. Ancient observatory El Caracol offers proof of the Mayans' astronomical observations and their close relationship to the universe.

Visiting Chichén Itzá allows travelers to explore the remnants of this once-flourishing civilization, providing a window into the rich history, mythology, and architectural achievements of the Mayan people. The site's grandeur and cultural significance make it a must-visit destination for history enthusiasts and those seeking to immerse themselves in the wonders of the ancient world.

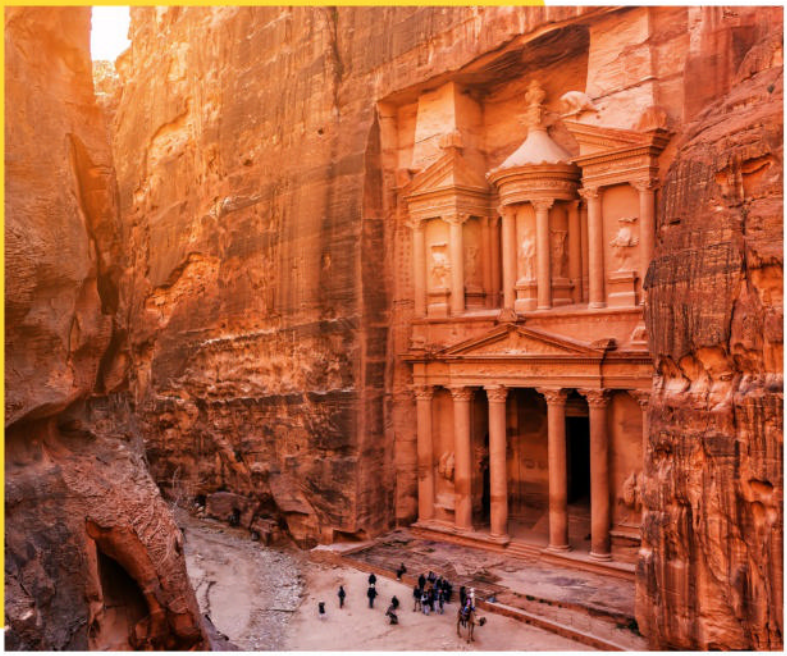
#2
TAJ MAHAL, INDIA

The Taj Mahal is a magnificent marble mausoleum in Agra, India, that is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a symbol of eternal love. It is an internationally recognised icon of beauty and architectural quality thanks to its elaborate carvings, symmetrical layout, and beautiful gardens. On their honeymoon, newlywed couples frequently travel to the Taj Mahal.

Miniature sculptures of the Taj Mahal (which are given to lovers as tokens of affection because it is seen as a symbol of love) are frequently offered at nearby tourist attractions. Emperor Shah Jahan, who ruled from 1628 to 1658, erected the Taj Mahal in memory of his wife Mumtaz Maal ("Chosen One of the Palace"), who passed away in 1631 while giving birth to their 14th child.

Taj Mahal's construction took roughly 22 years and 20,000 workers to finish. The mausoleums are crafted from priceless marble and decorated with exquisite geometric and floral designs. According to the Britannica Encyclopaedia, there are certain reports that suggest Shah Jahan aspired to build his own mausoleum out of black marble. Before any work started though, he was overthrown by one of his sons.

Today, the Taj Mahal attracts millions of visitors each year from all over the world, leaving enduring memories for many.



#3

PETRA, JORDAN

Petra, located in southern Jordan, is an extraordinary ancient city that showcases the architectural and cultural brilliance of the Nabatean civilization. Carved into the rose-colored sandstone cliffs, Petra is often referred to as the "Rose City" and is one of the most renowned archaeological sites in the world. The entrance to Petra is through the narrow and dramatic passage known as the Siq, a natural geological formation that leads visitors into the heart of the city. As you emerge from the Siq, you are greeted by the iconic Treasury (Al-Khazneh), an intricately carved facade that stands as Petra's most recognizable landmark.

A world of archaeological wonders opens up beyond the Treasury. The city is home to spectacular tombs, temples, theatres, and rock-cut constructions that display the Nabateans' highly developed architectural methods. The Great Temple, the Monastery (Ad Deir), and the Royal Tombs are a few of Petra's must-see attractions. When you explore Petra, you may meander through historic streets, admire intricate carvings, and take in the ambiance of a once-vibrant commercial centre. For tourists looking to immerse themselves in the wonders of the ancient world, Petra is a remarkable destination because of its unique combination of natural beauty, expert workmanship, and historical relevance.

Petra offers activities like trekking and exploring adjacent sites like the High Place of Sacrifice and the stunning views from the summit of Al-Khubtha Mountain in addition to the main archaeological site.

Petra continues to captivate travellers from all over the world due to its extraordinary beauty and historical significance, which have won it the title of UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, The New York Times, National Geographic Society, New 7 Wonders

#4

CHRIST THE REDEEMER, BRAZIL

Christ the Redeemer is an iconic statue located atop Corcovado Mountain in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It stands as a symbol of faith, unity, and a testament to human achievement. The statue depicts Jesus Christ with arms outstretched, embracing the city and its people.

The Christ the Redeemer statue was constructed between 1922 and 1931 and is composed of soapstone-covered reinforced concrete. Its height is roughly 98 feet (30 metres), and its outstretched arms are about 92 feet (28 metres) long, giving it a dramatic silhouette against Rio's breathtaking scenery. Heitor da Silva Costa, a Brazilian engineer, created the statue's design, while Paul Landowski, a French artist, sculpted it. Brazilian and French engineers and artisans worked together to develop it.

A well-liked tourist destination, Christ the Redeemer welcomes guests from all over the world. A magnificent train journey or a hike through Tijuca National Park is required to get to the top of Corcovado Mountain, where the statue is located. Visitors are rewarded with amazing panoramic views of Rio de Janeiro and the area's stunning natural scenery once they arrive.

The monument's significance as an iconic landmark has been further cemented by the various movies, photos, and cultural events in which it has appeared. ■

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By Edeline Anne Goh

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Whipping up your own ice-cream has never been this easy! Try these recipes out and we're positive you'll want to make your own ice-cream thereafter.

CREAMY VANILLA ICE-CREAM

INGREDIENTS

500 ml	Whipping cream
80 ml	Condensed milk
1tsp	Vanilla bean paste

METHOD

1. Whip the cream until stiff peaks. Be careful not to overwhip.
2. Then with a spatula, stir in the condensed milk and vanilla bean paste until mixed well.
3. Pour ice-cream mixture into a container and freeze overnight.
4. Enjoy the ice-cream as it is or mix it with your favourite treats such as almond bits, cornflakes or cookie crumbs for an added crunch.

MIXED BERRY WHIP

INGREDIENTS

500 ml	Non-dairy whipping cream
80 ml	Condensed milk
200 g	Frozen mixed berries

METHOD

1. Whip the non-dairy whipping cream until stiff peaks are formed.
2. Then, mix the condensed milk and frozen berries.
3. Gently give it a good stir and pour mixture into a container.
4. Freeze overnight and enjoy during hot and sunny days!

NOTE: Turn this into a kid-friendly and sugar-free option by omitting the condensed milk. Instead replace it with a couple of tablespoons of honey. ■

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Nasal spray
Semburan Hidung
Bentrio™
Protective Barrier Against Airborne Allergens and Viruses
Lapisan Penghalang Pelindung Melawan Alergen dan Virus Bawaan Udara
Triple protective effect
Kesan pelindung tiga kali ganda

Helps with nose allergy
Reduce and prevent symptoms of nose allergy.

Protects for ≥ 4 hours
Gel-designed for extended nasal residence time.

Children friendly
Suitable for children from age of 6 years and above.
* (Children shall not use device without supervision)

Drug free
Non-steroidal.
Preservative free.
Registered as a medical device.

MDA Reg.no: GA9675022-83292
Registered Under Act 737
MDAMD 0331/2022

Wellesta truelife

ARE YOU AT RISK FOR "SILENT KILLER" DISEASE?

Chronic kidney disease is a silent killer that affected 15.48% of the population in 2018 and it continues to be a public health concern in Malaysia.*

SYMPHONY NUTRACEUTICALS
CREATI NEXT
ADVANCED FORMULATION 200
A nutritional formula for stage 3 - stage 4 pre-dialysis patients
• High premium whey protein
• Improve nutritional well being
• Enhance physical strength
Special Nutritional Food
NON SOYA
PHYSICIAN CIRCULATION
NET WT: 33g x 15 sachets
NET WT: 33g

A Nutritional Formula for Stage 1 - Stage 4 Predialysis Patients

Stages of Chronic Kidney Disease		
Stage	Description of kidney function	GFR
1	Normal or high	≥ 90
2	Mildly decreased	60-89
3a	Mildly to moderately decreased	45-59
3b	Moderately to severely decreased	30-44
4	Severely decreased	15-29
5	Kidney failure	<15

(Source: Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcome)

Consult your doctor today to know more!

*Chronic kidney disease taking a growing toll in Malaysia. www.thesundaily.my. (2022, March 10). Retrieved July 6, 2022, from https://www.thesundaily.my/local/chronic-kidney-disease-taking-a-growing-toll-in-malaysia-BK8936751
*(2020). KDIGO 2020 Clinical Practice Guideline for Diabetes Management in Chronic Kidney Disease. Kidney International, 98(4), S1–S115. doi:10.1016/j.kint.2020.06.019
*Saminathan, TA, Hooi, LS, Mohd Yusoff, M et al. 2020, 'Prevalence of chronic kidney disease and its associated factors in Malaysia; findings from a nationwide population-based cross-sectional study', BMC Nephrol 21, 344.

For more enquiries please contact +603 7612 5476

SYMPHONY NUTRACEUTICALS

Z z Sleep Well

Traditionally used for difficulty in sleeping

Wellesta truelife

For more enquiries, please contact 03-7610 0030.

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